The Nine: Categories of Human Temperament



As parents, you probably already knew that you were NOT handed a "tabula rasa" or "blank slate" of an infant child. Your little packages were already a bit pre-programmed with something referred to as "temperament" before you even laid eyes on them.

Does this "pre-programming" mean that their future is already laid out for them? Not at all. But it does potentially give you a head start once you know what you're dealing with...

- 1. Rhythmicity (Regularity): Predictability of biological functions like appetite and sleep.
- 2. **Approach or Withdrawal:** Sort of the "extrovert" and "introvert" tendencies when presented with strangers, or novel acquaintances. Is the child eager or "slow-to-warm-up" to new people, places, and things?
- 3. Adaptability: Related to how well the child can "shift" and/or "adapt" to transitions and changes in their environment.
- 4. **Intensity of Reaction:** The level of excitement/boredom presented by the child with a new stimulus.
- 5. **Sensory Threshold:** Mostly related to the child's reaction to physical stimuli (e.g., sight, touch, smell, taste). Are they picky? Low threshold for pain and or sensory discomfort.
- 6. **Quality of Mood:** This is sort of the "optimist" and "pessimist" traits children carry with them. Sort of the "glass half empty vs. half full" trait in perception.
- 7. **Distractibility:** Level of interest displayed when the child is not necessarily interested in the activity at hand.
- 8. **Attention Span and Persistence:** This pertains to the child's ability to stick to a task when presented with obstacles. High persistance = capable of reaching goals. Low persistence = stronger social skills to rely on help of others.
- 9. Activity Level: This is the child's speed at "idle." The general activity level of the child

The Five: Personality Characteristics



- **1. Open:** Open to experience, inventive and curious. Appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ides, and a variety of experience.
- **2. Conscientious:** Efficient, organized with a tendency to self-discipline. Acts dutifully, and aims for achievement. Very planned rather than spontaneous.
- **3. Extroverted:** Outgoing, energetic, and positive. A tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others.
- **4. Agreeable:** Friendly and compassionate. A tendency to be compassionate and cooperative. Non-confrontational.
- **5. Neurotic:** Sensitive and nervous. A tendency to experience unpleasant emotions easily such as anger, anxiety, depression or vulnerability.

The Mix: The Genetic & Environmental Exchange

Consider how "the 9" and "the 5" mix-up and exchange uniquely. It is quite a bit of variability. Usually, there is no straightforward temperament and personality trait. They're typically complicated combinations. These combos are complicated even more by the environments in which they reside.

This is why behavior management can be very difficult for some families and professionals. There is no way one single method of intervention could address the wide range of human variability. Thus, you can afford to be skeptical of a "one-size-fits-all approach" when it comes to behavior management.

Are there evidence-based strategies that show promising effects? Yes. So, there is no reason to disregard the approaches that are out there, but its healthy not to adopt a singular approach. It is also wise to use discretion when choosing a non-research-based approach. That is, do not disregard an approach just because there has been no research supporting it, however, be advised that its use is unsupported. Public agencies like schools and some state hospitals cannot use strategies that have not been researched and proven to be ineffective.

Therefor, "the 9, the 5, and the mix" should all be considered prior to behavioral and educational intervention. How these separate constructs interact will undoubtedly affect the success of any given treatment opportunity. Let "the 9, the 5, and the mix" guide your approaches to 1) provide understanding of behavior, 2) provide direction for intervention.